

# SISYRINCHIUM BERMUDIANA

BY OLIVER ATKINS FARWELL

*Parke, Davis and Company, Detroit, Michigan*

Many botanists have in the past considered the pale-blue-flowered *Sisyrinchium Bermudiana* L., of the Atlantic coast, and the violet-blue *S. iridioides* Curtis, of Bermuda, to be conspecific and have united them under the Linnaean name. Philip Miller, who cultivated both, side by side, considered them to be amply distinct and described them separately in the Gardeners Dictionary in 1768 but applied the Linnaean name to the Bermuda plant and renamed the Atlantic coast species as *S. angustifolium*. William Curtis, who, like Miller, knew both plants, also considered them to be distinct and in the Botanical Magazine, plate 94, named the Bermuda plant *S. iridioides*; the date of the title page of volume 3 of the Botanical Magazine is 1790 but the printed date on the plate itself is September 1, 1789; the publication of the binomial must, therefore, date from that of the plate, 1789. Modern botanists follow the interpretation of Philip Miller by applying the name *Sisyrinchium Bermudiana* L. to the plant that is endemic in the Bermudas but this is contrary to the laws of priority as expressed in both the Vienna and American codes. Both of these species were described and illustrated by Plukenet in the *Almagestum* under his genus *Sisyrinchium*; likewise by Dillenius in *Hortus Elthamensis* under the Tournefortian genus *Bermudiana*. Linnaeus in the *Species Plantarum*, page 954, 1753, combined both species under the binomial *Sisyrinchium Bermudiana*, thus preserving to science both of the old generic names under each of which the species had previously been known. The specific name *Bermudiana* perpetuates an old generic name and cannot be considered as having been given to the species as a geographical name to indicate the nativity of the species; had that been the idea actuating Linnaeus he in all probability would have given it the name *bermudiense* adopting it from Plukenet *providing he had*

*intended the Bermudian plant to be the type of the species.* But Hemsley has already shown (Journal of Botany 22: 108-110. 1884) that Linnaeus *in all probability had never seen the plant from Bermuda.* As a matter of fact he made the Bermuda plant his var.  $\beta$  and considered it to be of such small categorical importance that he did not give to it even a varietal designation. That he intended the Virginia plant to represent typically his *S. Bermudiana* is clearly proved by the fact that all references to it were enumerated under his specific name and description while those referring to the Bermuda plant were grouped under his unnamed variety  $\beta$  and by the fact which is still more to the point, that the explanatory note with its fuller description was drawn entirely from his "Planta  $\alpha$ ," *i. e.*, the Virginia plant. A careful study of all the evidence seems to indicate that:

1. Linnaeus probably never saw the plant from Bermuda.
2. The specific name *Bermudiana* perpetuates an old generic name and was not used as a geographical name to indicate the origin of the species; this view *per se* would prevent the adoption of the Bermuda plant as the type of the species.
3. The Linnaean descriptions (diagnosis and footnote) are based upon the plant from Virginia, which must therefore be taken to be the type of the species.
4. The plant from Bermuda should be known under the first name applicable to it, *S. iridioides* Curtis.